

**BY ED YOUNGBLOOD
PHOTOS BY BRIAN BLADES**

More than 20 years before he established himself as a great novelist with "The Bonfire of the Vanities," and 30 years before he followed it up with the critically acclaimed blockbuster, "A Man in Full," Tom Wolfe walked into A.D. Farrow's Harley-Davidson dealership in Columbus, Ohio, attracted by a Chevy-powered motorcycle sitting in the front window. That motorcycle and its builder, Tom Reiser, were later memorialized by Wolfe in a series, titled "The New Life Out There," he wrote for the *New York Herald Tribune*. In "The Mild Ones," the December 19, 1965, installment that discussed the booming motorcycling scene of the mid-Sixties, Wolfe declared, "Reiser is an underground hero in the new motorcycle life-style."

That "New Life" series represented an original style of journalism that delivered real-life facts through an array of writing techniques borrowed from fiction, making some of the readers doubt that Wolfe's characters—including Reiser—could be real. But they were real, and a decade later, Wolfe's New Journalism style delivered "The Right Stuff," a landmark tale of America's Mercury astronauts.

Like Wolfe's writing of that era, the antics of Tom Reiser's early adulthood might well be confused with the stuff of fiction. Utterly obsessed with his V-Eight-powered monster, which Wolfe nicknamed "Tom's Bomb," Reiser turned this bizarre motorcycle project into an all-consuming addiction that cost him his job and a marriage, sent him on a brief journey to the West Coast, and even got him his job back—plus fame in *The Herald Tribune*—all in a span of less than five years. Then, eventually cured of his 327-cubic-inch addiction, Reiser refocused his creative energy on the development of some of America's most powerful Harley-Davidson Big Twins. Since that rebirth, his competition machines have won national and world champi-



**championship-winning V-Twins, Tom Reiser
builds bikes like no others**

Man in Full